Percy
Gill
Davidson
GURU-eFX

X-FORCE

Vol. 7

MARVEL

[kra_]
[koa_]

[reign_of_x]

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Vol. 7

X-FORCE

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You #!&%@ need to figure out what to do with the mess you've made of X-Force.
Logan... please...
...where are you going?
Hunting.
SNIKT
They're ready for you, Sage.
Show them who's boss.

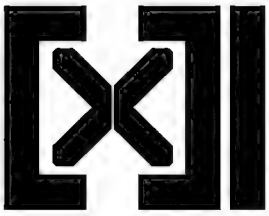
He always smelled like a wet cat to me.
And you know what? His odor has not improved in death.
SPLAK
Do I need to make a motion to dispose of the body? Or can we just do that?
I would raise him from the dead to speak for himself...
...but he is without mind or mouth.
CHOOOM
I always thought he was kinda sketch.
You don't know the half of it, dear. MGH. Legacy Virus. Traitor to the X-Men, ally to the Inhumans...
...and let's not even get started on Terra Verde...
I'm sorry, but the moral high road does *not* belong to Emma Frost.
And--nerd deep cut--let's not forget what happened with Threnody!
Oh, right...
We don't talk about Threnody.

Okay. Wow. #XSpoilers is going to be so mad.
Excuse me? Can I--?
In a moment, Tessa.
You all received the psychic briefing.
I'm not defending Beast per sē, but...
But?
But let's not form a virtuous mob and pretend that his motives are evil.
Don't ever touch me again. And choose your words carefully.
I have some thoughts...
Please. This is a complicated situation.
As Mystique points out...almost *all* of you have been similarly...*complicated*... at one point or another.
Has Beast made impure... even illegal decisions?
Yes. There is no argument there.
The fact that we just disposed of his booby-trapped body and he's already operating in one resurrected outside the protocols says it all.
But if the question shifts...if we ask instead, "Is Beast an enemy of Krakoa?"
Well... I don't think there's an easy answer.
He killed Wolverine.
Murdered, I should say. He *murdered* him.

True. An undeniable crime.
But...Wolverine responded with a crime of his own, and he's not on trial. No easy answers, as I said.
I know I'm not a member of the Quiet Council, but...
Please. Speak freely.
Beast left the island and took a significant amount of compromising data with him.
I'm not defending him. But he is defending us. We're philosophically and strategically splintered. That's the problem.
So how do we do better going forward? How do we build a united front we can all agree on?
So...we're just going to let him go?
Sage...I sense your frustration. We very well might need to hunt Beast down at some point.
But right now Krakoa is struggling diplomatically. Everyone wants access--some by *force*--to our resurrection technology.
Beast is making independent defensive choices for Krakoa. I have no doubt he'll take out some of our aggressors--
--but we'll be off the hook with the UN.
These are-- ***truly***--deniable operations. Rogue acts of war.
Our hands are clean.
It's really a brilliant maneuver.
There have to be consequences!
And there has to be change that comes out of this.
What did you have in mind, Storm?

I would like to see Sage appointed the director of X-Force.
Assuming that's something you want, Tessa?
Very much so, yes.
I've been thinking of our previous operation as the beta model.
Now that we've worked out the kinks in the software, we can reboot properly.
Excellent. And in that same spirit of renewal and independence, let's forget Beast entirely, shall we?
In other words, he's not an ally of X-Force, but he's not a target either. Leave him be.
I'm...excited to get to work.
The first task, of course, is getting a new HQ up and running, and--
Sage?
I have one more request.
And I hope you don't feel I'm questioning you or undermining your authority.
But it's clear that X-Force needs oversight.
I motion that one of us joins X-Force and reports back regularly to this council.
That's an excellent idea. Any objections?
I... Okay... That's fair.
Who will it be, then?

I volunteer.
Unless there are any objections.



His natural inclination is to hide. Behind his beard. Behind his steel skin. Behind his silence. But the island is a difficult place to keep a secret. There are telepaths who pluck thoughts like fruit from the branches of minds. There are stones that listen to whispered conversations, and there are roots that run like nerves through the soil, tracking every step. On Krakoa, even beneath the thick jungle canopy, the sun still seems to shine.

The more you retreat, the more people look for you. So he has given himself over to the Quiet Council. Among these mutants, the commanding authority of a nation, he is not considered the smartest or the most powerful; instead, he is known to be as solid and reliable as a pillar. Nobody suspects a pillar. His deception should be baldly visible for all these Omegas and schemers to see, but none do.

If this is the controlling body of Krakoa, then X-Force is its sword. And now Piotr will manipulate them both -- in his quiet, patient way -- until the blade turns and sinks its point into the green heart of the island.

ЛЕТОПИСЕЦ

[00_Destiny]
[00_____ofX]

X-FORCE

NEW BLOOD

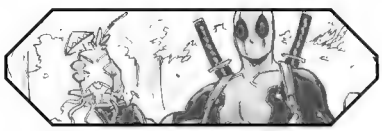
X-Force is changing. New leaders have stepped in, but with a reduced team and no headquarters, the clock is ticking to get up and running before the next threat to Krakoa rears its head. Yet with so many loose ends left by the former administration and Colossus overseeing the group while secretly under the control of his brother, Mikhail, those threats may be closer than anyone knows...

Editor's Note: This issue takes place concurrently with WOLVERINE #32.

[SAGE]

[COLOSSUS]

[BLACK TOM CASSIDY]


[DEADPOOL]

[OMEGA RED]

[DOMINO]

[WOLVERINE]

[00_mutant__espionage]
[00_law_order____X___]

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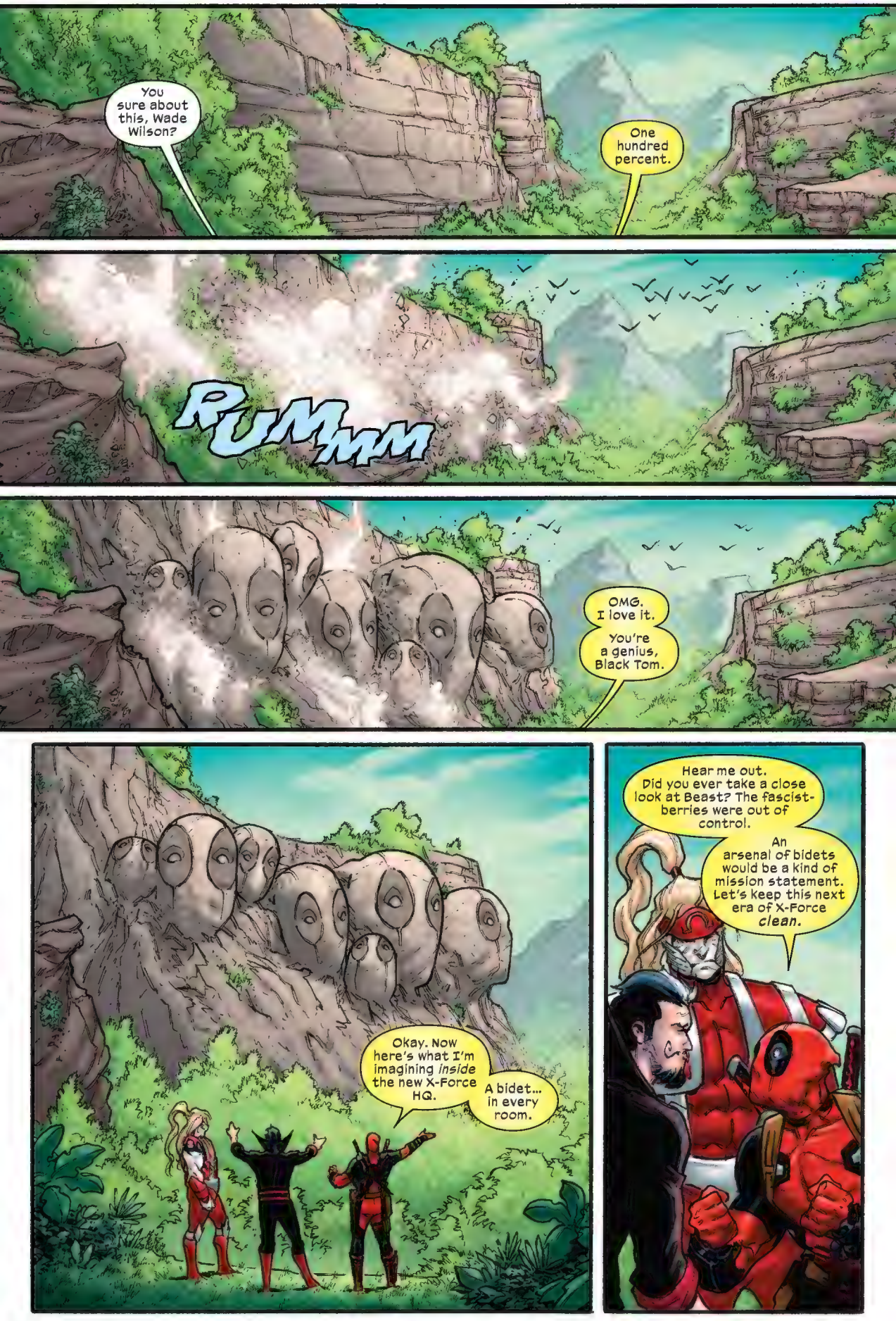
[00_00.....39]

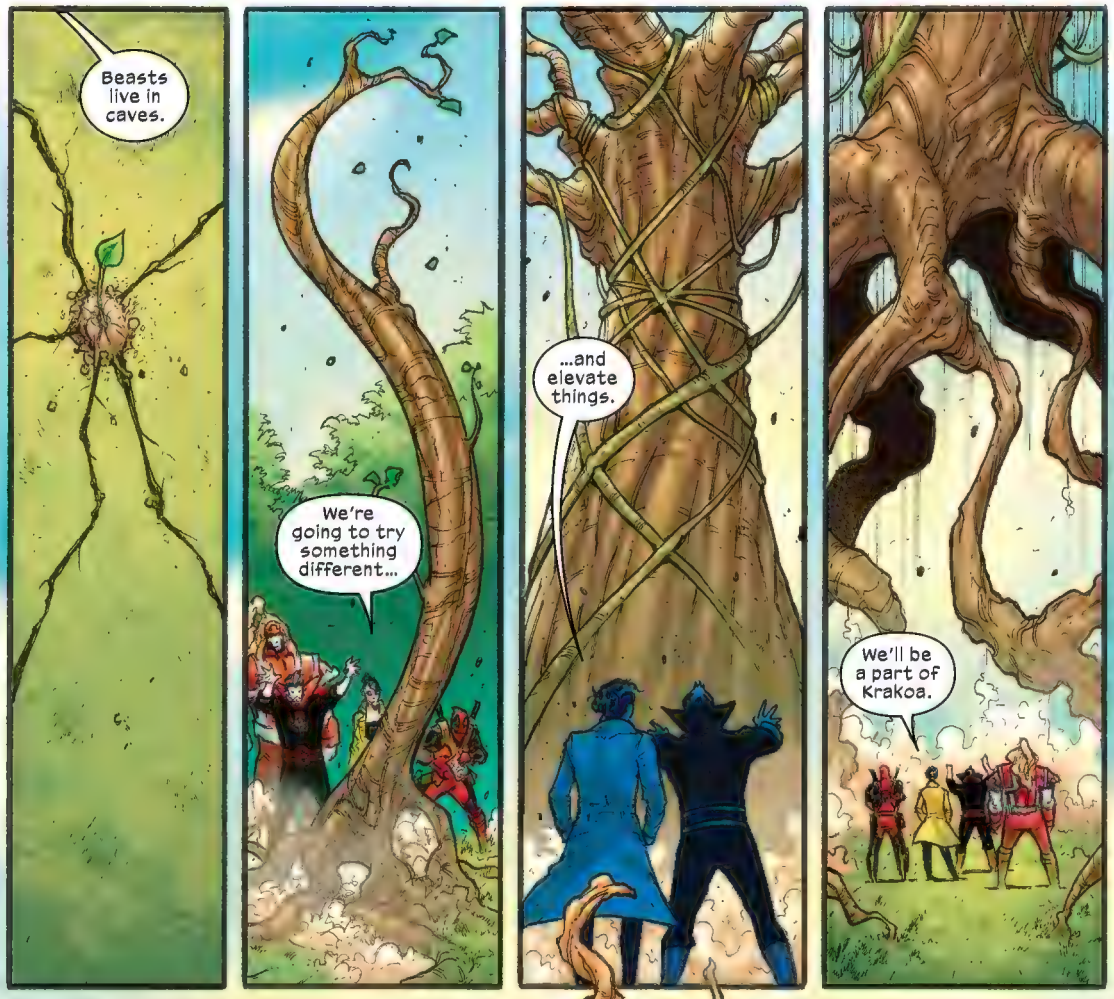
Internal Affairs

39

You know what I been thinking, mates?
I been thinking that for all the high and mighty political grandstanding Krakoa does...
...Beast was up to no damn good in this prison.
"I've got a cellblock of biotech abominations I been holding on to."
And I'm thinking it's high time we unload this cargo.


You sure about this, Wade Wilson?
One hundred percent.
RUMMM
OMG. I love it.
You're a genius, Black Tom.
Okay. Now here's what I'm imagining *inside* the new X-Force HQ.
A bidet... in every room.
Hear me out. Did you ever take a close look at Beast? The fascist-berries were out of control.
An arsenal of bidets would be a kind of mission statement. Let's keep this next era of X-Force *clean.*

Something like this, then?
That's beautiful! Also, I'm going to insist on a snack fridge.
Krakoa is always pushing the veggies and fruits, and baby wants some sodium, corn syrup and trans fat.
What's a healing factor for if not gas station food?
Super Salty Pork Rinds
What about you, Big Red? -Chomp- Any wishlist items?
A soundproof room. A simple chair over a good drain sits in the center of it. Hooked chains hang from the ceiling. There is a fully stocked tool bench, along with a tray of surgical instruments and a car battery with jumper cables.
Huh.
That was unsettlingly specific.
I don't know what these two have been feeding you, Black Tom...
...but *this* is what we're doing.
Yes, mum.


Beasts live in caves.
We're going to try something different...
...and elevate things.
We'll be a part of Krakoa.

And we'll be apart from Krakoa.

SAGE'S LOGBOOK: HACKER

Sometimes people refer to me as a hacker. But I reject the term as violent and misleading. Hacking implies adamantium claws tearing through brick or steel or bone. What I do is far more elegant.

To enter a database protected by firewall security, you don't hack anything. You don't destroy or tear down what's already there. You analyze. And based on your findings, you revise or subvert or sneak through the loopholes in the existing code.

I will approach the leadership of X-Force as I would approach a particularly complex and problematic piece of code. There is no need to hack it. I have been studying the weaknesses for years. I am privy to the rotten parts. And if I'm going to wrest control of this system, I simply need to understand the omissions and build in protections.

Can you defend a country without invading privacy? Or spreading disinformation? Or blackmailing? Or killing? Maybe not.

But maybe -- within our existing code -- we have been missing something critical: a moral matrix that I will do my very best to construct.

This game is called Take a Shot.
The Green Lagoon. Krakoa.
You take a shot.
Then you take a shot.
We go clockwise.

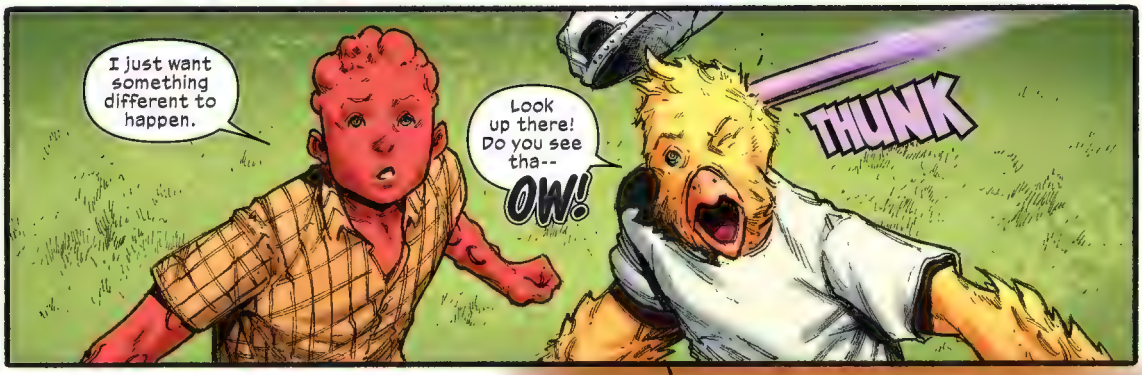
If you fall...
...you lose.
If you knock somebody out, you take another shot.
And then you take another shot.
Your old man teach you this game?
Why would you ask that?
SNIKT
CHUK

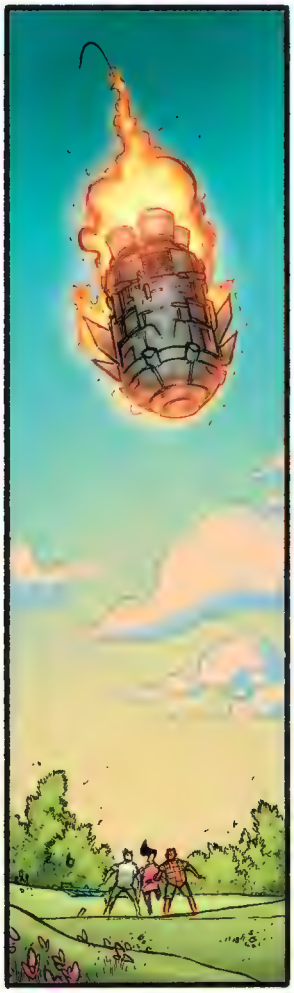
I dunno. Just feels like a Wolverine thing.
If it feels like a Wolverine thing...
...that's because it is.
SHIKT
SHIKT
That's because I am the Wolverine.

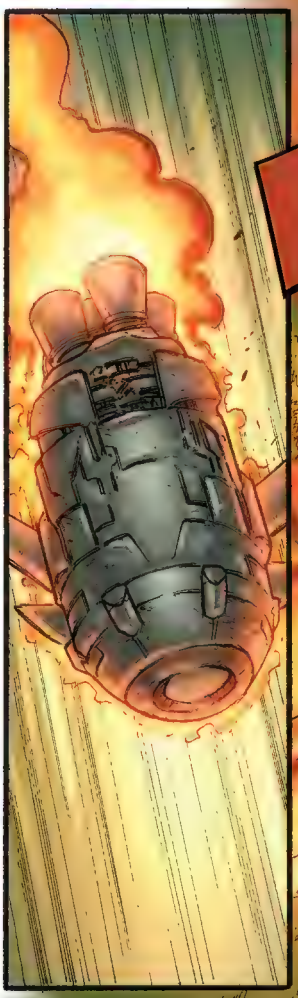
I win.
If you have a moment, I'd like a word.
A word? That all you'd like?
Just a word.
You may have heard that X-Force is going through some changes.
And I need a Wolverine.

That's his thing.
Logan quit?
Not anymore it's not.
He's... going his own way right now.*
*For more details, see recent issues of WOLVERINE! --MB
Wolverines don't do teams. We're a bunch of @#!&. Better left alone.
Nobody seems to get that.
We all have selfish and ugly and destructive impulses.
Believing that those impulses define or own us--believing that we can't change--that's the true weakness.
I'm not going to dehumanize you by calling you a weapon.
But I *am* going to point out that you're incredibly powerful--and I *am* going to ask...what have you been doing with that power lately?
Quentin goes missing. Jean quits. Logan quits. And by all accounts, X-Force is up to a bunch of shady @#!%.
So help change that perception from the inside. We are getting attacked from every direction, and you--
THOOOOM
What the @#!%...?
X-Force, this is Sage, do you copy?
All units report.

Sometimes I wish it would snow.
So we could have a snowball fight? And build a snowman?
Yeah, sure. But also because when it's always sunny, it's like every day keeps repeating itself, you know?


I just want something different to happen.
Look up there! Do you see tha--
OW!
THUNK





THOOOM

What is that?
It's a spaceship. From space.
Hello?
SHIK

Get behind us.

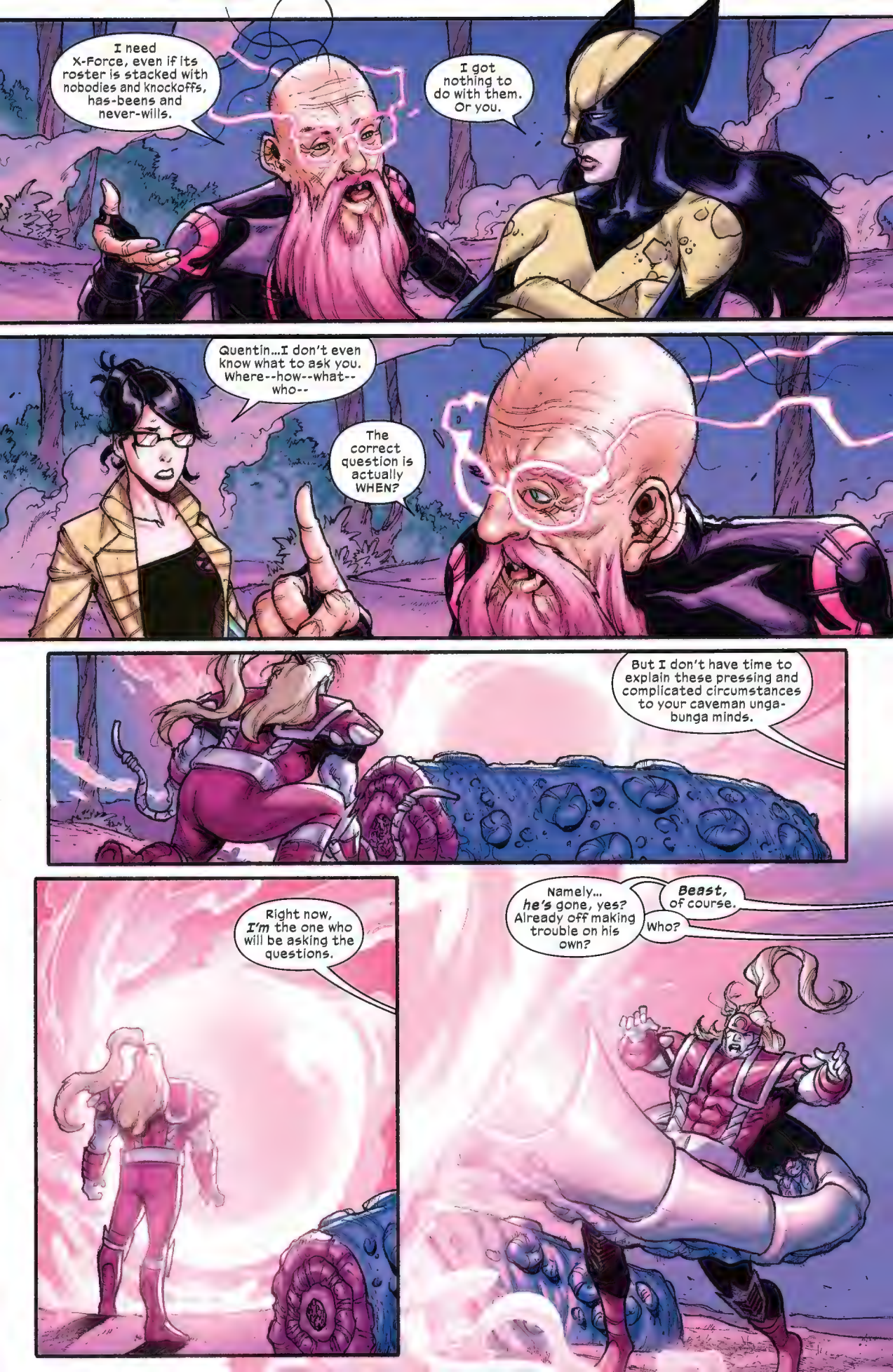
Wolverine?
Thank you...
You saved us.
Doesn't feel terrible, does it?
Looking out for your own?
You could make a habit of it.
SHOOM
What now?

Oh, good. You're all here.
Quentin?
I know you're going to find this hard to believe...
...but I need your help.

The Ghost Calendars Part 1

Now, what was I saying before...?
Ah, yes. I think I remember.
Doomed!
You're all doomed!
Or you will be, if you don't listen to your old friend, Quentin Quire.
I'm sorry, but...Quentin? Is that really you?
I'll admit that my brain is basically flashing "Does not compute, does not compute" right now.

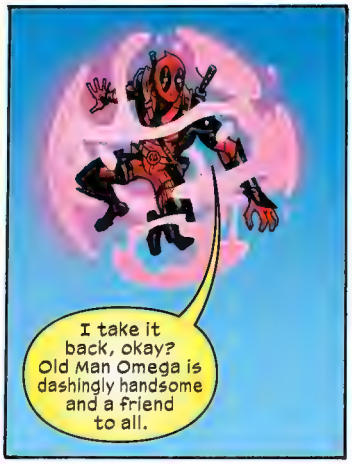
Yeah, how do we know you're not a figment of my imagination after eating too many Hot Pockets seasoned with Krakoan wacky tobaccy?!
Really? You invite *him* onto the team in my stead?
Playing X-Force's greatest hits, are we? Couldn't you be a little more original?
Watch it, old man!
There's only room in this comic for one alliteratively named, meta-commentary smart-ass who shields his wounded insecurities with inappropriate humor!
You're like if middle-school bathroom graffiti was a person. I'm already bored. Goodbye.
Okay. It's definitely him.
Let him down!
Oh, please. Are you actually coming to his rescue? Does that mean you're, like, ***redeemable*** now?
Sigh Things have really gone sideways since I left.
But I suppose you'll have to do.


I need X-Force, even if its roster is stacked with nobodies and knockoffs, has-beens and never-wills.
I got nothing to do with them. Or you.
Quentin...I don't even know what to ask you. Where--how--what--who--
The correct question is actually WHEN?
But I don't have time to explain these pressing and complicated circumstances to your caveman unga-bunga minds.
Right now, I'm the one who will be asking the questions.
Namely... he's gone, yes? Already off making trouble on his own?
Who?
Beast, of course.

Why do you think I'm here?!
Omega Red!
What was that thing? Where does that portal lead?
Better to show you.
Time to move out.
We've got a cataclysmic mess to clean up.

And Beast is to blame.

Hey, guys? Guys!


I take it back, okay? Old Man Omega is dashingly handsome and a friend to all.

Actually, #$%& that guy.

Follow me. Quickly and quietly.
What about Omega Red?
It might be too late for him.
We need to get out of sight before--
DOOSH
Piotr...what's wrong?
I... I'm not sure.
Everything's a bit spinny and foggy.
I...feel like I just woke up after sleeping for a hundred years.
Time travel can cause nausea, nosebleeds, vertigo, hives and explosive diarrhea.
As long as you spare us the latter, I've got you.
Now when I say we need to hurry, understand that we need to hurry!

The wreckage smoked, occluding the sun that always shone on Krakoa. Colossus stood in the ruins of the fallen vessel. Broken bodies lay all around him. His knuckles were wet with their blood. He had stopped this invasion. But he would soon lay the groundwork for another.

The time was nigh. Mikhail had gathered an adequate number of super-soldiers for--

Colossus was as surprised as anyone by the blinding pink flash. The air seemed torn, as if a hole had been punched through reality. Out of this whirl of light stepped a figure who was both familiar and uncanny.

He wore the costume of Kid Omega, but his back was hunched and his knuckles cubed with arthritis. His eyes were foggy with cataracts. His head was bald except for a few stray whisps. Most of the hair on him seemed to have settled into a long, messy pink beard. When he opened his mouth, asking for their help, only a few rotten teeth nested in his gums.

~~Colossus turned and ran.~~
~~Colossus scooped his comrades into his arms and told them he would keep them safe as he carried them away from this aberration.~~
~~Colossus picked the old man up and tore him in half.~~
~~Colossus...~~
...
...
...
...

[Mikhail: Why have you stopped writing, Chronicler?]

[Chronicler: Because...I have lost him.]

[Mikhail: By that, do you mean you've lost track of his role in our plot?]

[Chronicler: I mean exactly what I say. I have lost him. Piotr is gone. Our connection has severed.]

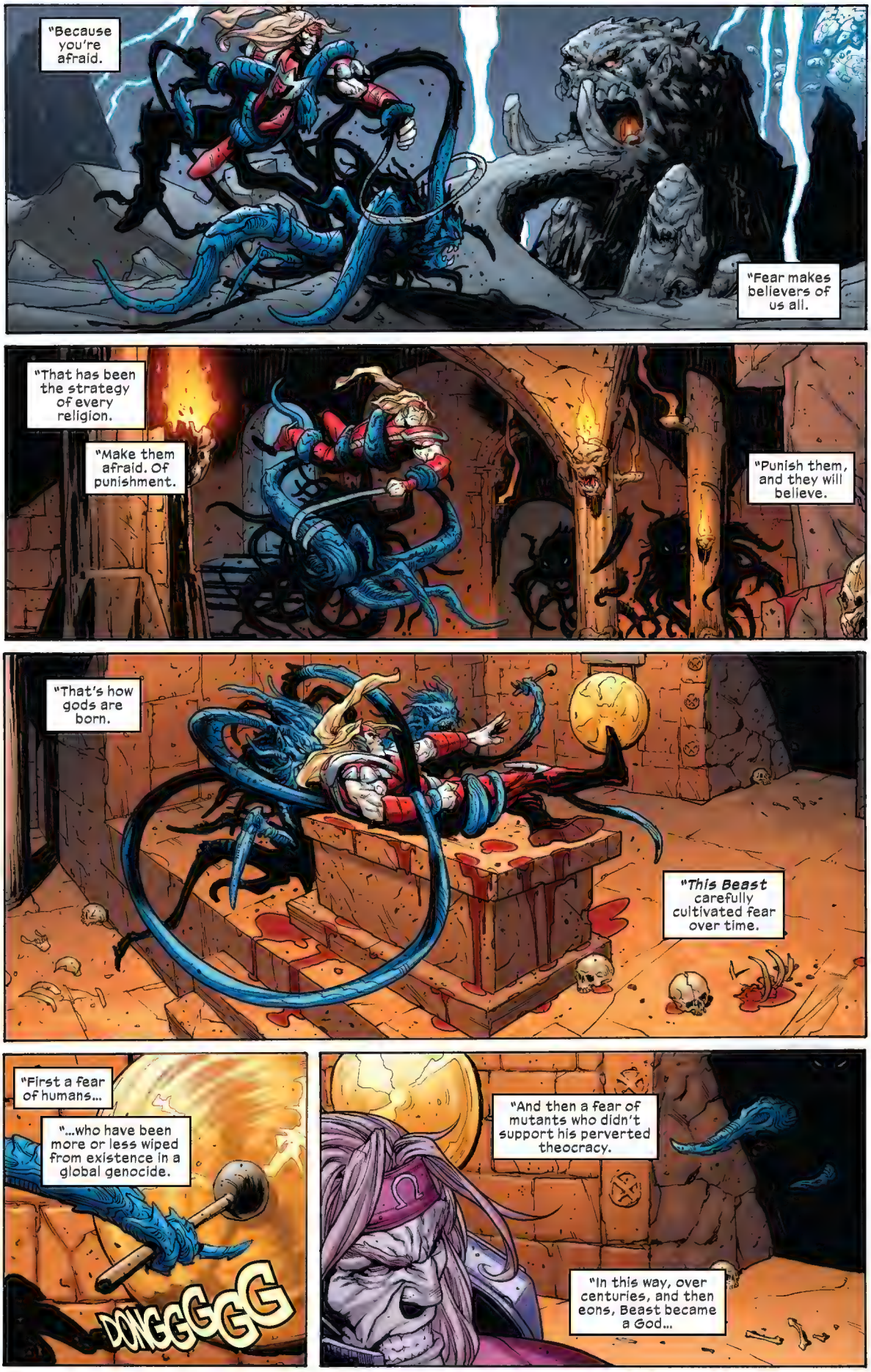
ЛЕТОПИСЕЦ

sniff
sniff
What is it?
What it is, I don't know.
SNIKT
SNIKT
A hostile. That much is clear.

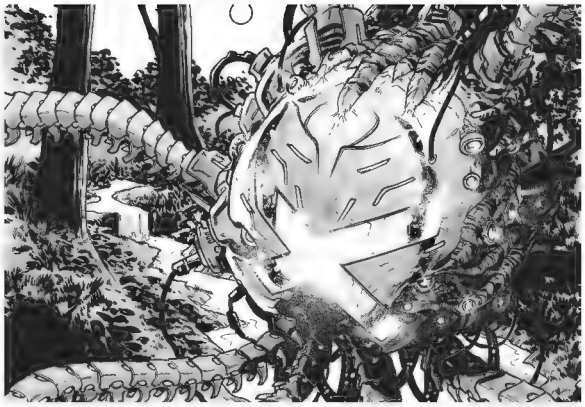
HAR R.R.R.
SHIK
BUDDA BUDDA

I told you to come with me.
You're truly imbecilic at following orders.
WAAOOOO
Hurry. And this time, do as you're told.
WAAAAOOOO
With the sirens going, more of the Beast Priests will come.
In here.
Beast Priest?
Beast Priest.
What's a Beast Priest?
Stay quiet until we're below.

What about Sage and Colossus?
They're already with the crew.
What crew?
The crew of the rebellion.
What the @#$%...?
SNIKT!
You don't understand...
RUMMMM
SNIKT! SNIKT!
SNIKT
SNIKT
...but now you believe.


"Because you're afraid.
"Fear makes believers of us all.
"That has been the strategy of every religion.
"Make them afraid. Of punishment.
"Punish them, and they will believe.
"That's how gods are born.
"*This Beast* carefully cultivated fear over time.
"First a fear of humans...
"...who have been more or less wiped from existence in a global genocide.
DONGGGGG
"And then a fear of mutants who didn't support his perverted theocracy.
"In this way, over centuries, and then eons, Beast became a God..."

"...the God of All Mutants."



CEREBRAX
<FORMER CEREBRO CRADLE>

:Employed by Professor X, Jean Grey and Wolverine as a guide when navigating history during Mikhail Rasputin's timeline incursion:

::Likely as a result of psionic infusion, the unit became sentient and corrupted::

:::Whereas before its purpose was to store psychic data, it now grew hungry and actively sought out mutants, consuming their intelligence and powers:::

::::Cerebrax ultimately possessed Krakoa itself, rising up as a towering organic monster::::

:::::Kid Omega (Quentin Quire) plunged into the heart of said monster, destroying it in a psionic blast:::::

::::::In that explosive moment, Cerebrax and Kid Omega experienced a convergence, and Quentin found himself both rattled and entranced. He was an Omega-level mutant who had always felt like he belonged in the shadow of Jean Grey. But with this sudden access to the timeline, he saw his potential for true greatness. In the hands of an Omega, Cerebrax would be a tool, a weapon. He witnessed a terrible glimpse of the future and extricated himself from the present to investigate further the threats that awaited mutantkind::::::

:::::::The body and the mind of Kid Omega thereafter vanished from the present, all traces of him wiped from the cradles, because he did not wish to be replicated in his absence -- there is not enough room in the world for more than one Quentin Quire, after all:::::::

I'm sorry it's come to this.
SNIKT!
We'll finish this fight for you.
So, what's the *plan?* We kick down the door and make hamburger of the Beast Priests?
What's the plan? Up to now, our leader has been a floating @#$% head for @#$% sake.
We been fighting and failing in this war. For lifetimes.
You're the cavalry. You tell us what the @#$% plan is.
SSSSNRRRR
Zzz--heh? Who? What what?
You're supposed to have some kind of plan?
A plan, you say? What kind of plan?

Oh, wait. I remember! Kill the Beast is the plan!
We need to talk.
How old are you now, exactly?
Well... that's hard to say.
Because you can't remember.
Because when you're waging a time war, you tend to lose track of what century it is.
But I've been at this a long time. A long time. And I'm...
I'm getting tired, Sage.
I think I'm beginning to understand why the ultimate know-it-all sought us out for help. We're here for you.
About that...there's something else I've been meaning to tell you. It's incredibly dangerous and important and...
And... and...
Yes?
And...I forgot.
But I'm sure it will come back to me!
It's fine, Quentin.

How you feeling, Colossus?
My mind is disoriented, but physically, you can count on me.
You think you can chuck me onto the roof of the temple?
I know I can.
Give me one minute to get into position. Then the rest of you follow.
Follow?
There's no time to explain the @#$% that comes next. Omega Red could already be dead.
So just read my mind and relay the message to the rest of the crew, old man.
Oh. Oh, that's...fine, I suppose.
I probably would have recommended a bit more brilliant strategy and showboat maneuvering, but the blunt instrument can certainly be effective.
So, I guess you're with us, after all?
I don't got much of a choice, do I?

Let's kill our way home.
@#$% this future.
@#$% Beast.
KRINSH
And @#$% X-Force.

SNIKT SNIKT SNIKT!
FWABOOM
SNIKT SNIKT SNIKT!
SNIIIIIKT!
Oh my.

What did you do?
Nothing.
It was all him.
Arkady? What happened?
The God of All Mutants ate me.
But I am not easily digested.

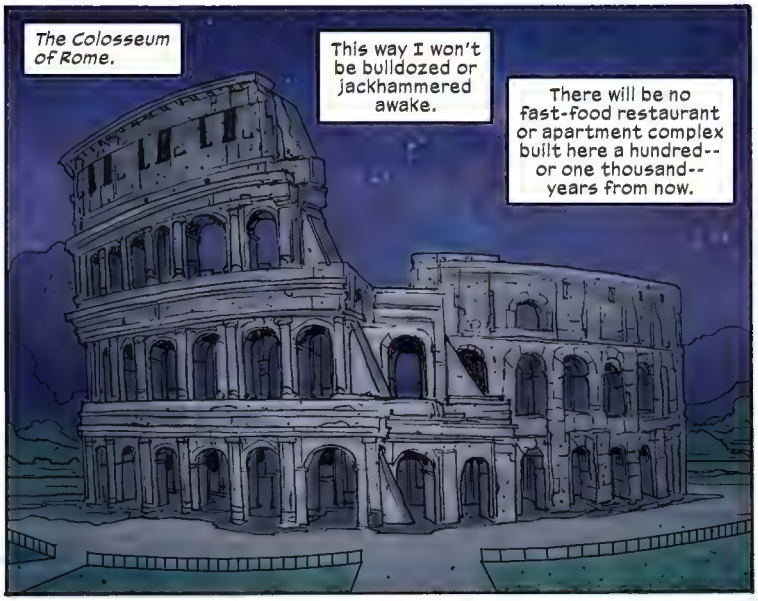
Anyway. Let's get the @#!% out of here and back to the Green Lagoon.
Back to the Green Lagoon. That's funny.
Why is that funny?
Perhaps I haven't fully explained myself.
By saving the end of things, we might have created a new beginning.
But the old beginning still needs to end.
I said before that *this* Beast had become the God of All Mutants.
But there are *others.*
You see, the Beast of your time has planted various versions of himself to influence the future.
These experimental hatchlings and mutations wait. They observe. They scheme. They emerge when the time is right.
So we have to work our way back.
Back to the beginning of the end.
To root out his infection of the timeline.

"I can't tell you exactly what we'll encounter.
"But I can tell you that the worst that has already happened is yet to come."

The Ghost Calendars Part 2

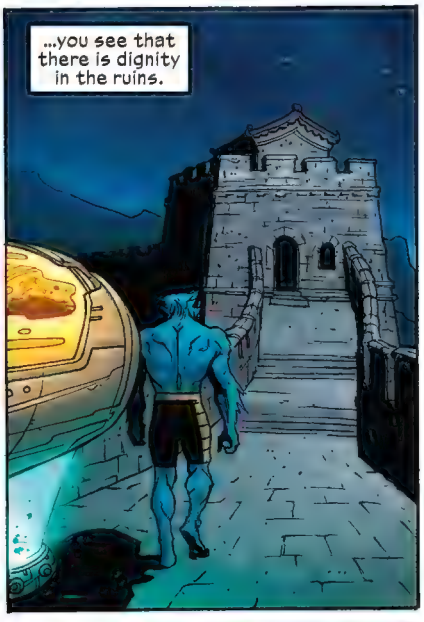
The Pyramids of Giza.
There are chambers of the pyramids that remain untouched.
I go as deep and as dark as I can.
To a place of sacred preservation.
This was the burial room of a royal priest.

But a different sort of sarcophagus will now rest inside it.
The Egyptians would preserve the body so that the *ka*--or soul--could one day return.
I am here in the same spirit of *revival.*


The Colosseum of Rome.
This way I won't be bulldozed or jackhammered awake.
There will be no fast-food restaurant or apartment complex built here a hundred-- or one thousand-- years from now.

I can't say the same of any other inch of the planet.
Here I can rest. I can wait.

The Great Wall of China.
If you look at the remains of our greatest structures...


...you see that there is dignity in the ruins.

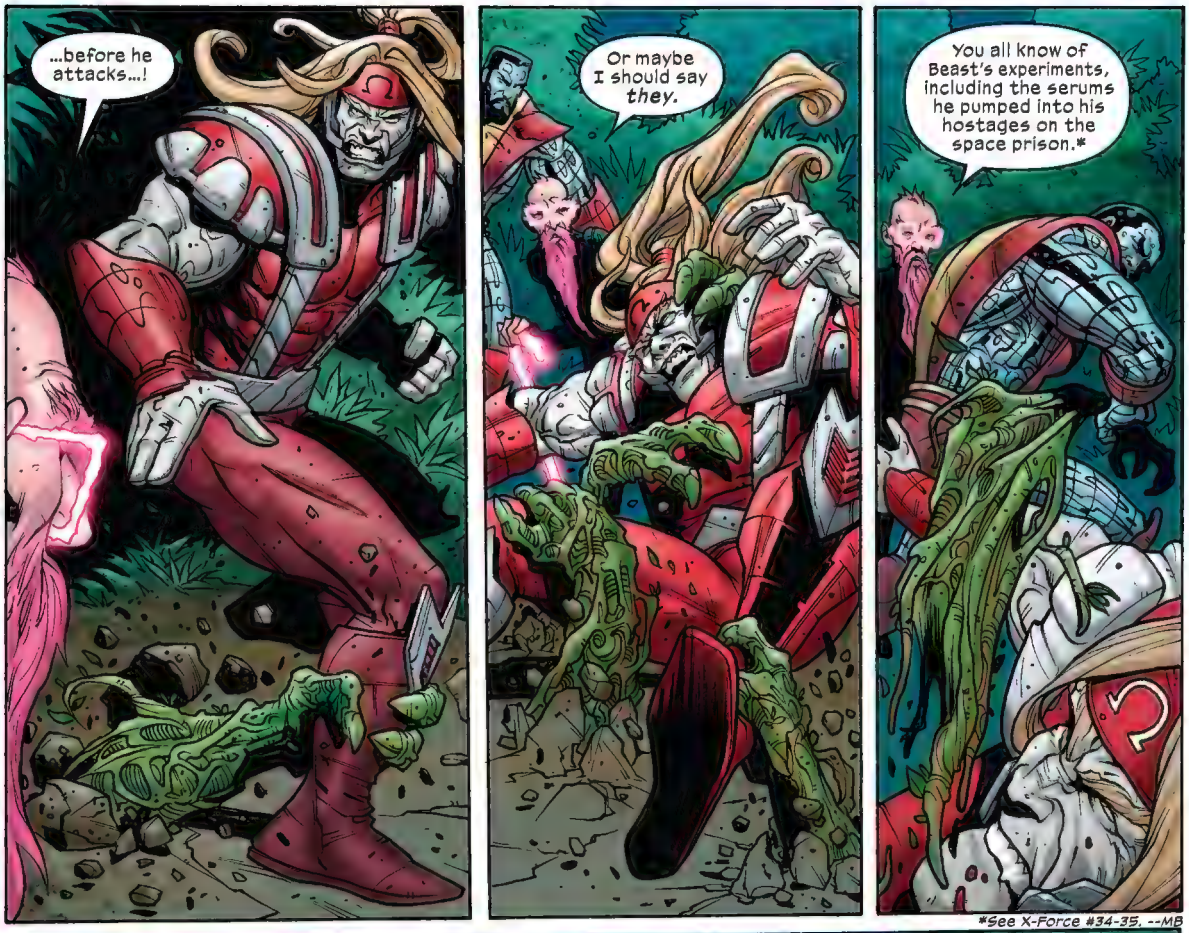
Teotihuacan.
Like the haggard faces of certain old writers.

The rulers who conscripted architects must have anticipated this in their design long before they broke ground.

Stonehenge.
Because power is a long game.
If you're clever enough...
...and patient enough in your planning...
1,000 years later.
...your work can outlive you.

5,000 years later.
Quentin...
...what are we looking at here?
This flora that's taken over the landscape appears to be--
--Krakoan. Indeed it is.

Krakoa is more than an island in this future.
It is a *world.*
No time to marvel. We must make haste.
Every one of our footsteps is registering within the larger floronic network.
We're being felt and watched and heard and smelled and tasted by the living organism that surrounds us.
It's only a matter of time...


...before he attacks...!
Or maybe I should say *they*.
You all know of Beast's experiments, including the serums he pumped into his hostages on the space prison.*

*See X-Force #34-35. --MB

...by splicing his mutant gene into it to create a hybridized organism.
-Gak-

It's all right!
Do not resist!
We're among friends.

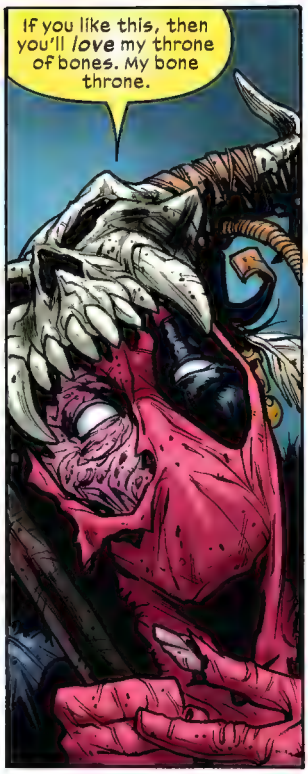
Staten Island
Of all the places to survive the end of the civilized world...
Staten Island
...Staten #ŧ%& Island would not have been my first guess.
Now who hired out those chauffeurs?
It's about time you got here.

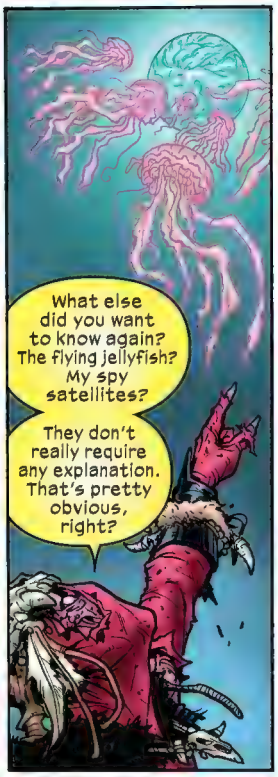
I've been waiting impatiently to join the fun. Ever since Grandpappy Omega ditched me.

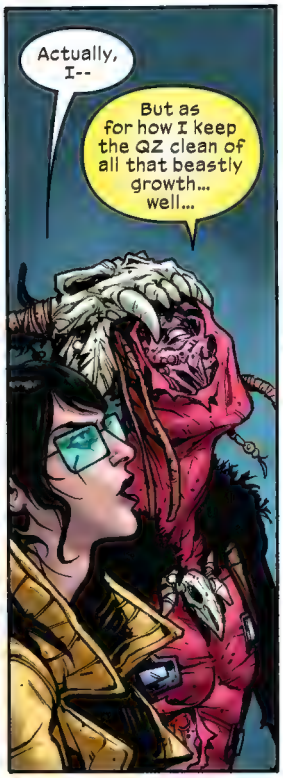
Wade?!
These days, most people call me Skulldozer the Magnificent.

I...don't even know what to ask first...
Why are airborne jellyfish doing your bidding? How is this area clear of growth? What are you wearing?

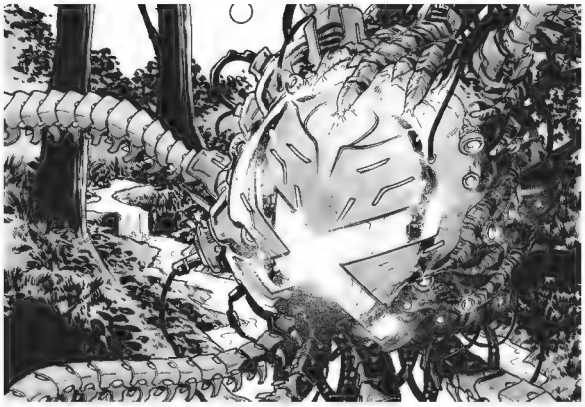
Oh, this old thing?
This is just my post-post-post-apocalyptic vibe.


If you like this, then you'll *love* my throne of bones. My bone throne.


What else did you want to know again? The flying jellyfish? My spy satellites?
They don't really require any explanation. That's pretty obvious, right?


Actually, I--
But as for how I keep the QZ clean of all that beastly growth... well...

...we spray the place down with herbicides daily.
Not the healthiest solution, I'm afraid.
But Skulldozer the Magnificent does what he can for his tumorous minions.
Go play kick the skull with the other kiddies!
I'm officially taking command of this outpost.
Um. I *officially* saved your shriveled ass, so maybe you could show some gratitude by, say, giving me a rad psionic blimp or something?
Or some neon-pink heels maybe. I've always wished I was taller.
I can see what's inside of that diseased mind of yours, you know. And it's...
It's... what?
You didn't look at that time I walked in on Blind Al naked, did you? Because that would upset anyone.
GKK--!
Mmff. Ehhh?



CEREBRAX
<FORMER CEREBRO CRADLE>

CEREBRAX IS QUENTIN, AND QUENTIN IS CEREBRAX. QUENTIN IS CEREBRAX, AND CEREBRAX IS QUENTIN. QUENTIN IS QUENTIN, AND CEREBRAX IS CEREBRAX. CEREBRAX IS QUENTIN, AND QUENTIN IS CEREBRAX. QUENTIN IS CEREBRAX, AND CEREBRAX IS QUENTIN. QUENTIN IS QUENTIN, AND CEREBRAX IS CEREBRAX.

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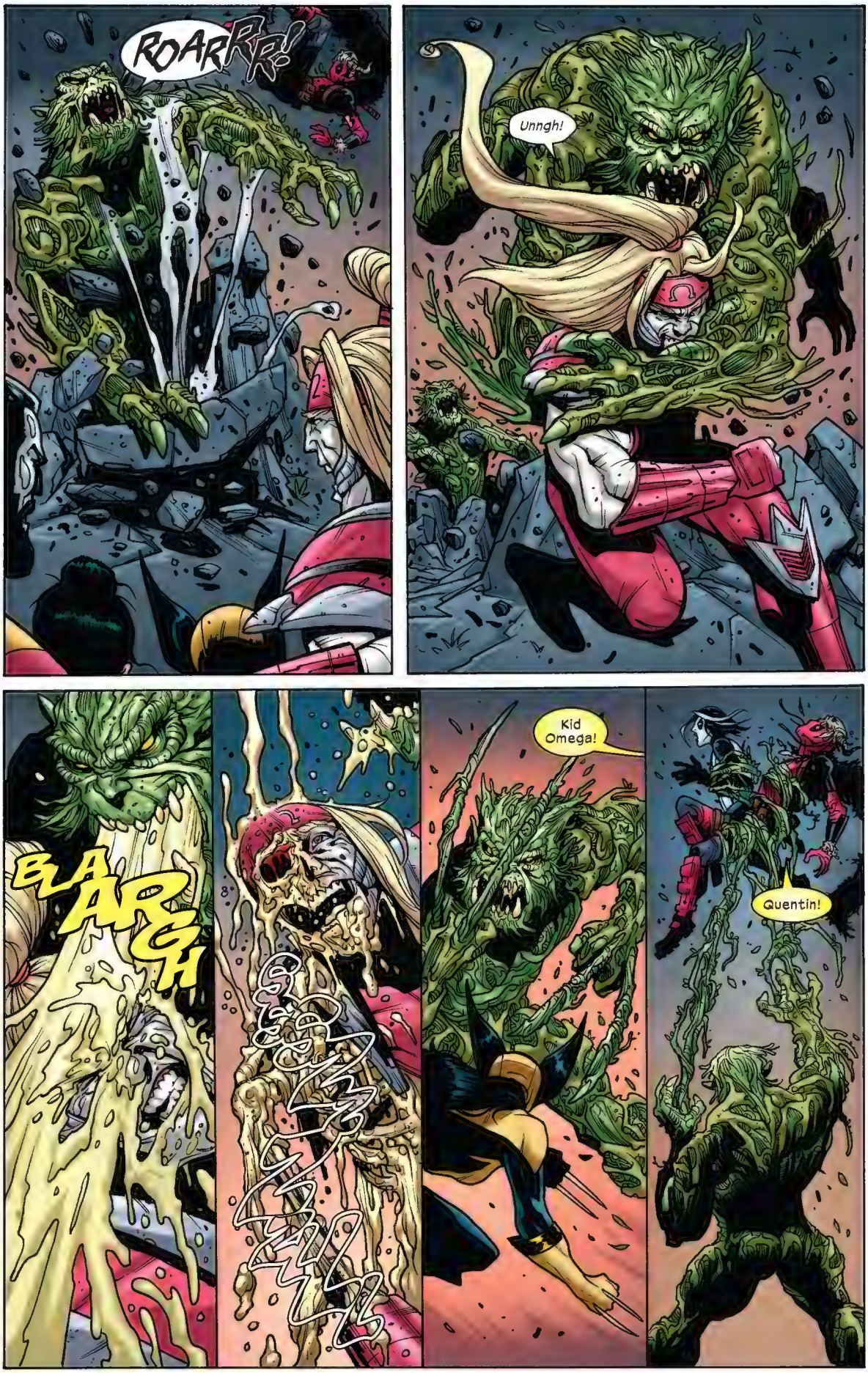
Shut up! Shut up, I can't think!

Quentin! Quentin, can you hear me?
#$%&. Do you think he had a stroke?
If only we were so lucky.
That's not funny.
It's not a joke. It's true.
Maybe you should stop talking now.
I only meant...it would be better if he had a stroke, given the alternative.
Oh, so you mean you guys don't know what's wrong with him?
And you do?
What do you know?
I'll tell you earlier.
You mean later?
No. I mean, earlier.
I don't speak idiot.
RUMMMM


ROARRR!
Unngh!
BLARGH
Kid Omega!
Quentin!

Seriously. Come on. Get up.
Ehhhh...?
What's happening...? What happened?
I am temporarily unsuited for leadership.
You're in charge. Fix this.
Drink this? Drink what?
I am rather parched.
Fix this. I said, *fix this!*
Hmm. Fix this. Yes.
I can do that.

Every weed has a root.
To kill it...
...you just need to yank it in the right place.
KROOOM
SCREEE
They're falling apart.
The garden is dead.
And so is Quentin.

When I considered the future of mutantkind -- and guarding against the many threats that await us -- my thoughts turned to *pinus contorta*: more commonly known as the lodgepole pine.

The tree germinates with fire. When flames spread through a forest, the resin in the cones flare and spark and deliver the nuts that will be born in the ash. The end comes for the parent before the beginning comes for its children.

So I have planted my nuts, I suppose you could say. These versions of me -- these children of the Beast -- will awaken when the flames find them, when the mutants need me most.

-- BEAST

[henry.....[0.0]
[mccoy.....[0.0]

Quentin was our ticket out of here...
Yes.
#$%&.
Exactly.
What are you thinking?
Piotr?
We're sure, right? That there wasn't some sort of screwup or deception?
This has been Beast all along, yes?
As opposed to who? Dark Beast?
That hasn't occurred to you?
Why are you so eager to excuse his behavior?
When Krakoa began, did you look at others and wonder if there was a mix-up in the DNA stew the Five were brewing?
That we somehow ended up with white-knight versions of Magneto? And Apocalypse?
It's been him all along. He's always been this person.
He just needed the right combination of power and circumstance to bring that part of him fully to life.
I just... didn't want to forget about the good in him.
He's a #$% traitor.

Piotr?
Yes, Neena.
What's that?

-Wheez-
-KOFF-
-HAK-
BLAG!
Quentin?!
Are you all right?
I'm fine.

I said I'm fine, and I'm fine!
Don't be ageist.
Are you sure?
Now get over here.
This will be our final jump.
And just to warn you...
...I saved the worst for last.

JDC
DVW

The Ghost Calendars Part 3

Disaster is perpetual.
Charles knew this. He knew that Krakoa would fail...
...because every utopia fails, because paradise is fleeting.
Times of prosperity and peace are inevitably offset by war, recession, disease, storms.
That's why he appointed me as X-Force's director of intelligence.
I have studied history's recurring jolts and systemic illnesses.
By knowing the past fully, I am able to fix the future.
I am a disaster artist.
I can envision a world where mutants thrive because we defend ourselves ruthlessly and strategically and visit suffering onto those who will one day be threats.
I have buried many versions of myself in monuments throughout the world, monuments that should stand the test of time.

Even as I remained dormant, the data drives accumulated the knowledge of passing time...
...constantly updating a mental and physical version of me best suited for the defense of mutantkind.
So that when I rise now...
...the Promethean fire of this epoch has made me truly immortal...
...and the ultimate intelligence.

BEAST'S LOGBOOK: UTOPIA 2.0

When people think of gods, they often imagine them above, as if every star in the sky was a glinting peephole. Being watched is the best kind of threat -- a quiet and constant reprimand that encourages good behavior. That's what keeps society functional. That's why governments relied on the old gods. An invisible force was watching, even if you were out of view of the police and soldiers, so you would think twice about stealing or murdering or whatever moral failing tempted you.

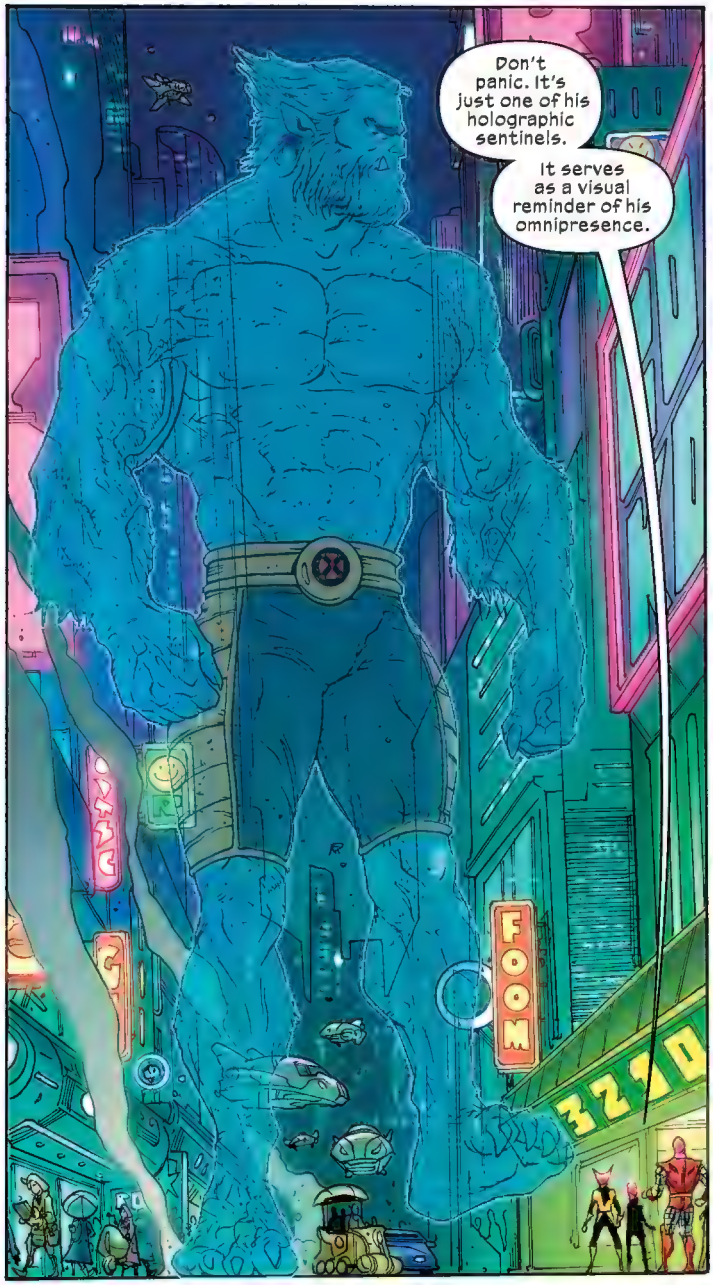
Surveillance technology is the work of new gods. It's what makes my omniscience -- and, in turn, omnipotence -- possible. Charles knew this. Cerebro helped realize the promise of Krakoa. All mutants were being recorded, their consciousness regularly uploaded to a server. The notion was imperfect in its execution -- but so was Utopia. These societal experiments should both be considered excellent rough drafts that I have since perfected.

I am above, in the citadel overlooking the city. I am watching, in the monitoring devices implanted in every eye. The Cerebro Sword is a mindful weapon. When someone knows they are observed, they behave. When everyone behaves, civilization thrives.

This is my gift to mutantkind.

You've followed me this far.
It's only a little farther now.
We're at the end of the beginning.
This is the world of Nimrod Beast.
1,000 years from the present.

Beast has outfitted the population with surveillance tech.
Their lives are constantly monitored, keeping them in line.
When we walk among them, facial scans will no doubt set off some alarms, so...
Ski masks? Isn't this *more* suspicious?
Ski masks aren't part of the cultural lexicon anymore.
They're not associated with robbery. They're not even associated with skiing.
Quentin...
The @#$% is that?


Don't panic. It's just one of his holographic sentinels.
It serves as a visual reminder of his omnipresence.
FOOM

Every now and then, it offers up an obnoxious Shakespeare or Kafka or Kissinger quote...
...but otherwise mostly minds its own business.

Now try to keep up, youngsters.
Almost there.
THE SANCTUARY

Can we talk about a game plan? I could use a telepathic upload of the city's design, history and technology.
First, you need to see this.

DON'T FEED THE HUMANS
So you truly know what's at stake.

These are some of the last humans.
Beast killed off the *sapiens* with a nanobot incursion.
The only others who survive are hidden away in caves and ruins. And--
Hrk!
Quentin! What's wrong?
I never thought I'd feel bad for humans.
But the mutants have gone full-on *1984*.

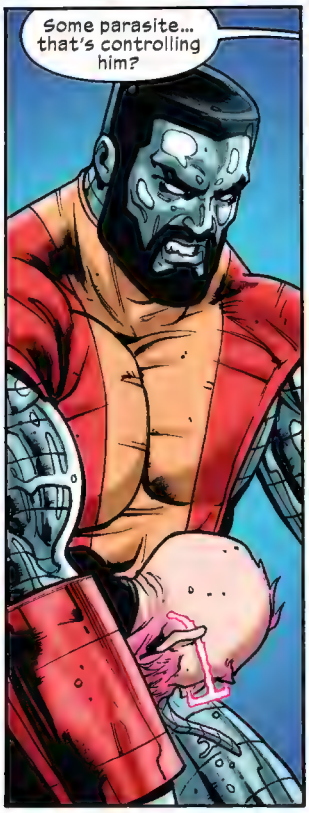
+Sigh+
Fool? I'm bored.
Entertain me, Deadfool.
Isn't there anything left to scheme?
There's nothing left to scheme, Deadfool.
Isn't there anyone left to kill?
There's no one left to kill, Deadfool.
What about more war crimes? Aren't there more war crimes?
There is nothing criminal about fighting for what is right.

No more war. No more crimes.
I guess you're too smart for your own good.
If you want more trouble and gamesmanship...
SK
TINK
THINK
SNIK
DONK
SHNK
SKAK
...you should really try being more of a nimrod, Nimrod.
The only reason I kept you alive, Deadfool...
...was to make a mockery of you as a failed totem of X-Force and of humanity.
IZZAP
Don't test my limits. You only exist because you're a bad joke.
Your healing factor won't work if you're atomized.
ALERT! ALERT!
What's this?!
It can't be...

Quentin?! Whatever's going on with you, I'm sorry...
...but the timing isn't great.

If there's any way you can rally, we need you.
...hhrn...

What in God's name is that?!
There's something inside him!


Some parasite... that's controlling him?

All right, X-Force.
I don't know that we have any choice except to immediately attack the intelligence at the center of all this.

That seems our likely target.

But it looks like we're going to have to fight our way to the finish line.
If they attack, take them down.
SNIKT
SNIKT
But try not to kill anyone.
SLASHH
They're not our enemy.
Beast is.
This is a world without autonomy.
CHOOM

Quentin...
SALE
Quentin!
Mmmf!
Eh? Where... who...when... What's happened?
Ah!

I take a breather for one minute...
...and suddenly, everything's a disaster!
It's rather pathetic how dependent you are on me.
Quentin... what happened to you back there?
I took a little snooze. That's all.
No. No, this was--
CHOOM!
@#$%!

My old friends.
My one-time allies.
Buckle your psionic seatbelts, and hold on to your tickleberries.
You've come all this way, all this time...
...to stop me.
TROOM!

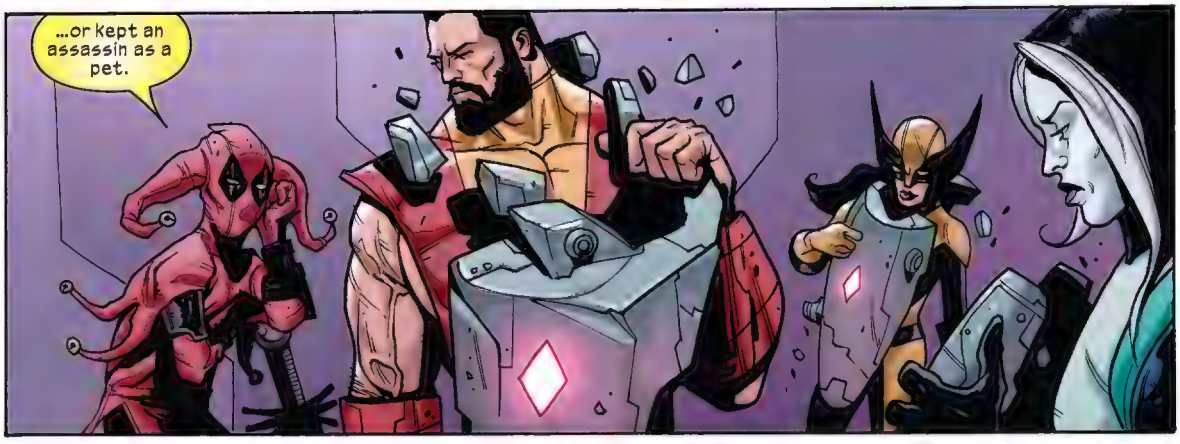
OWENS
It's rather adorable.
I'll admit I'm pleased to see you.
I've been so bored lately.
My busy mind does not enjoy the idle life.
So thank you.
You're very welcome here.

Later.
Isn't this fun?
I'm almost tempted to let you go just to completely dominate you again.
Mff. Insh.
What's this? Part of the game perhaps?
A ruse to get me to let my guard down?
BL ARG
Please. He's sick.
I think the power inhibitor has weakened his ability to control it.
Ak ak
Oh, that's good. That's rich. Well done.
Elicit my sympathy...
...and then, just when I'm feeling generous...

...spring a trap!
What the devil...!
SHOOM
Colossus? Now would be a good time to break--
I'm trying.
Cerebrax is Nimrod Beast, and Nimrod Beast is Cerebrax.
Cerebrax is hungry.
For all the minds of all the mutants.
Cerebrax is the future, and the future is--
SHAK

Oopsie.

STOP
"Maybe the big bad omniscient autocrat shouldn't have left his hardware laying around..."


...or kept an assassin as a pet.

"Analog wins over digital any day, am I right?"

Quentin? Quentin, please tell me you're okay?
=Hunnn.=
Because I really, really, really want to go home.

DOMINO: Something feels different between us.

COLOSSUS: How?

DOMINO: I'm...actually talking to you.

COLOSSUS: Weren't you talking to me before?

DOMINO: No. You've been...distant. But more than that. Different. Closed off. It's like your mind and heart had a steel barrier over it, the same as your skin.

COLOSSUS: Neena...

DOMINO: Yes?

COLOSSUS: Neena, listen. I need you to do something. It's important. It's maybe the most important thing you could ever do for me.

DOMINO: You know I'd do anything for you.

COLOSSUS: When we get back to Krakoa, go to my farm. Make certain I'm not there at the time. Go to my farm and --

Quentin...
Quentin, wake up.
Did I--?
You did.
We're home. On Krakoa.
Piotr?
Go on.
What were you trying to tell me before?

‹There he is!›*
*Translated from Russian.
Piotr?
‹I can feel my connection to Piotr returning...›
Piotr?
Go to your farm and what?
‹Piotr did not linger, but hurried away, because he had so much work to do.›
‹In response to Domino, he only said--›
Nothing.
I was telling you nothing.
To be continued...

X-Force #39

by Joshua Cassara
& Dean White

X-Force #40

by Joshua Cassara
& Dean White

X-Force #41

by Joshua Cassara
& Dean White

X-Force #42

by Joshua Cassara
& Dean White

X-Force #39 Variant

by Geoff Shaw
& Edgar Delgado

X-Force #40 Variant

by Philip Tan
& Sebastian Cheng

X-Force #41 Variant

by Salvador Larroca
& GURU-eFX

X-Force 42 Variant by James Stokoe

X-Force #40 Spider-Verse Variant
by Björn Barends

X-Force #42 Stormbreakers Variant
by Nic Klein

X-Force #42 Hellfire Gala Variant
by Carlos Gómez & Jesus Aburtov

It's a new era for X-Force — and a new era means new members!

Laura Kinney, A.K.A. Wolverine, and Piotr Rasputin, A.K.A. Colossus, join the team. Let's just hope one of them isn't harboring a deadly secret that's set to destroy their teammates! The revamped squad must contend with Beast's plans, as well as a blast from the past — and future! The once-Kid Omega is back! But where has he been? What's different about him? And where is he taking the team? Mysteries will be revealed as Hank McCoy's dark agenda is fully exposed! But what will this revelation mean for mutantkind, and does X-Force still have time to stop what's been set in motion?

Collecting:
X-Force (2019) #39–42

By:
Benjamin Percy, Robert Gill, Paul Davidson and GURU-eFX.

MARVEL

PARENTAL ADVISORY

Jack.T.Ripper

BLOODY MARVELOUS!